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BRIEFING PAPER FOR THE PRESIDENT'S PRESS CONFERENCE

APRIL 24, 1963

SUBJECT: SOVIET TROOPS IN CUBA

QUESTION: What has, or is being done by whatever means to encourage or demand their ultimate withdrawal?

CURRENT SITUATION REPORT

* The US note of April 3 to the USSR contained the following statement:

"In taking vigorous action to prevent misuse of its territory, the Government of the United States trusts that the Government of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics will not misinterpret such action as indicating any change in United States opposition to Soviet military involvement in Cuba."

* The President in his news conference of April 3, 1963 made the following statement:

"Well, we estimate that 5,000 Soviet troops left in November, immediately with the missiles, and with the bombers. And we estimate that in the last month approximately 4,000 Soviets have left. If we accept the figure which was always a rough calculation that there were 21,000, 22,000, Soviets there at the height of the crisis, we could get some idea of where approximately we think the figures are today.

"It is bound to be a generalized figure because it is impossible to take a detailed head count. That still leaves some thousands on the island. We hope they are going to be withdrawn and we will continue to observe very closely in the next days, the immediate weeks ahead, whether there are going to be further withdrawals which, of course, we wish for."

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* Possibly another 1,000 or so have left so far in April. Since we cannot identify the units to which departing troops belonged (they have been seen only in civilian clothes boarding ship or on board) and since we have detected no sizeable equipment removal during 1963, we have no reliable means of estimating the current dispositions of Soviet troops in Cuba. We continue to believe, however, that no major component of the Soviet military establishment in Cuba has been completely dismantled during 1963 or turned over to the Cubans.

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SUGGESTED REPLY:

- * Our insistence upon the removal of Soviet troops from Cuba is well known to the Soviet Government.
- * There continues to be some outward flow of Soviet troops from Cuba, and we trust that, in due course, the withdrawal will be completed.